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FREE and IMPARTIAL

THOUGHTS, *K*
ON THE

Sovereignty of GOD,

THE
DOCTRINES
OF

Election, Reprobation,

AND
ORIGINAL SIN:

Humbly Addressed

To all who BELIEVE and PROFESS those
DOCTRINES.

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THOUGHTS

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Sovereignty of God

BY

DOCTRINES

OF

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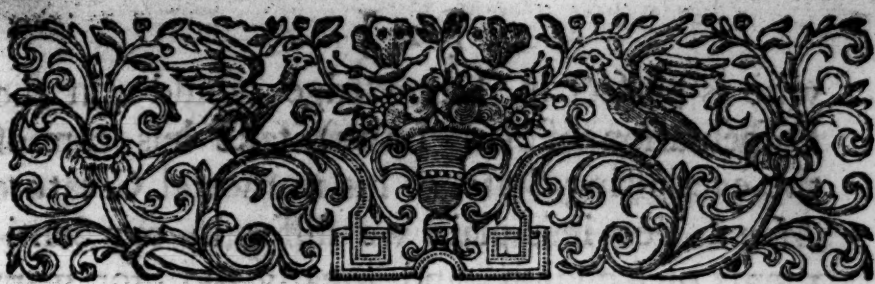
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DOCTRINES

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FREE and IMPARTIAL

THOUGHTS, &c.



CHRISTIANITY having been instituted, by its great Author and Publisher, for the Benefit and Advantage of Mankind, it is pity we should so greatly differ concerning what *Genuine Christianity* is; if the *Holy Bible*, as we generally agree, was designed to lead us to the true Knowledge of God, and to be a standing and perpetual Rule of *Faith* and *Manners* to Men, it must surely have been greatly corrupted since the primitive Times of the Gospel, or the *Explication* of it designedly left to a more excellent and superior Director: For the seeming Contradictions and Multiplicity of obscure Passages wherewith it abounds, shew plainly it could never be a Rule of Faith, &c. becoming an all-wise and perfect Being to give to rational Creatures. Every good Man, Society, and State, study Perspicuity in all their Rules, Orders, and Statutes, dispensed to their Families, Members, and Subjects; and can we suppose, that He
A who

who is perfect in Knowledge would (in the Dispensation of his Laws) take less care of the everlasting State of his immortal Creature *Man*? Yet it is plain we differ in our Sentiments of Religion, and greatly too, for want (as I sincerely hope) of better Helps to direct our Inquiries in Matters of so considerable Moment. Therefore,

I INTEND in the Course of this Debate to descant *freely* on the Doctrines of *Divine Sovereignty, Election, Reprobation, and Original Sin*, and also the Arguments which some ingenious Gentlemen have used to support them. But I hope (with regard to the *Authors* I may possibly name) to be perfectly decent, and to treat them with all becoming Respect and Deference, as I think Men of Integrity, Learning and Abilities deserve; who, though in some Points they may err, and hold Doctrines in their own Nature and Tendency altogether subversive of Religion and Morality, do nevertheless not perceive them to have these Tendencies, and are therefore by *no Means* chargeable with them. Yet as touching the *Doctrines* themselves, I shall presume to speak freely in regard to their Nature, and what appears to me to be their genuine Fruits and Effects.

IT is with me an establish'd Truth, that the mistaken Notion of some *learned Men*, concerning the *Sovereignty* of the *Deity*, has given these Doctrines a more favourable Acceptance

ceptance in the World, than otherwise they would or could ever have met with; and notwithstanding all the Pains and Arguments these Gentlemen have bestowed to reconcile their Doctrines to our common Sense of *Right* and *Wrong*, it is plain that at *bottom* this is the grand governing Principle. For when their Attempts to reconcile these Doctrines with common Sense and Equity fail, they have immediate Recourse to God's *Sovereignty*, and even go so far as to deny there is *any* intrinsic Deference in Things themselves, as shall be made appear from their most approved Writers, whenever they are pleased to demand it; but as this principle of *Sovereignty* is most certainly their strong Hold, I shall therefore endeavour to go to the Depth of this Argument, and shew, in the first Place, how greatly they misapprehend the Nature of this *Attribute*; and, in the second Place, granting it to be as they say, I shall then shew the precarious and miserable Condition of all Mankind, not excepting the Elect themselves under the Government of such an arbitrary Being.

To begin with the first,—That God is a Sovereign we readily allow: But it will not therefore follow, he is *morally capable* of doing any thing in its *own Nature* immoral or unjust. All religious Debates are allowed to be best determinable by the divine Attributes; and yet nothing is more common than to single out, and lay the greatest Stress on that

Attribute alone which appears best to suit our own particular Opinions : which, however innocent our Intention may be, is, I think, in itself, a very erroneous and unwarrantable Procedure ; for as God is *all-wise* and *good*, as well as *almighty* and *independent*, it is in the Nature of Things impossible (and therefore we should never admit it possible) he should be capable (in a moral Sense I mean) of exerting any one particular Attribute in *Opposition* or *Diminution* of another. A *Sovereign* he is, nor can any Creature whatever dispute his *unlimited* and *uncontroulable* Power over his *whole Creation*. But Power alone, without Wisdom and Goodness to make a right Use and Application of it, may be perfect *Frenzy*, and run into the greatest Latitude of *Folly* and *Tyranny*. It is, if I may be allowed the Comparison, like a *Vessel* that has lost its Helm, continually exposed to the tossing of Winds and Waves. To talk therefore of *mere Sovereign Pleasure*, without Regard to the proper Reason or Fitness of Things, so far operating and being in the *Divine Mind* (and which is nothing more than the Presence and Operation of his own Wisdom) in order to prefer what in its own Nature is *best* and *fittest* to be done, is excluding from the *Deity* those *more* blessed and *valuable Perfections* of *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, and establishing in their room, and at their Expence, mere Sovereign Power alone. Physically speaking indeed, we allow God can do Evil itself; but the moral Perfections of his Nature

Nature are to us an *infallible* and *unshaken Security* that he *never will* do it. *Man* being an impotent and fallible Creature, liable not only to mistake the true Nature and Importance of Things, but when he does understand his Duty rightly, liable also thro' the Prevalence of *Habit* and *Passion*, to be very backward and defective in performing it, must necessarily be subject to such Laws as contain in them Rewards and Punishments proper to influence his *Hopes* and his *Fears*. But as *God* on the contrary is a Being of all possible and infinite Perfections, an exact Knowledge of what we call *Right* and *Wrong*, *Just* and *Unjust*, ever hath and always will exist in the *Divine Mind*, and be to him a perfect, constant, and invariable Rule of Action in relation to his Creatures. He that is *infinite* in Knowledge, cannot but know at all Times, and under the most (to us) difficult and perplex'd Circumstances of Things, what in its *own Nature* is *best* and *fittest* to be done, and (being void of all Bias, Prejudice and Passion) cannot but approve of what is *right* and *best*, and being likewise *Almighty*, no Power can possibly interrupt or prevent what he determines to accomplish: So that it is morally impossible that *God* should do an evil Thing. These Truths are so deducible from each other, and in themselves so evident to all unbiaſſed and inquisitive Minds, that one would wonder to find Men of Learning and Integrity give into the contrary Sentiments; which in Effect they do, who hold Doctrines *naturally subversive* of these fundamental

fundamental Truths, which all certainly do, who departing from the moral Good and Fitness of Things, resolve all into *mere sovereign Pleasure, independent* of Wisdom and Goodness, which must ever be at hand to co-operate with and govern the Exertion of their favourite Attribute, *sovereign Power* itself; or if they do not expressly affirm this, they do by another Method in Effect the very same thing, and that is by denying the *intrinsic Difference* of Good and Evil, which according to them has no Foundation in the *Nature* and Relations of Things, but takes its Rise only from the mere Will and Appointment of the *Deity*. But if all Things are in themselves equally Good, where is the Use to *appoint*, or the Sense of talking about it? Wisdom and Goodness must according to this Notion be idle and unmeaning Sounds, without Sense or Service. But alas! the natural Consequence of maintaining Tenets so repugnant to common Sense, is seldom less than running into other Absurdities, in themselves equally great with what they are brought to defend. And here, as some of these Gentlemen are exalted, and I hope deservedly, to the Dignity of Teachers in the *Christian Church*, I hope they will permit me to ask them a Question or two, which I should on almost any other Occasion blush to ask any rational Man, *viz.* If they do not perceive an intrinsic Beauty and Excellence in Virtue, as opposed to Vice, independent of all *positive* or arbitrary

trary Appointment, tho' of the *Deity* itself; and whether besides the Commands of God (which to be sure are of great Importance, and ought ever to be urged with great Strength and Energy) they do not also *press* upon their Hearers the Practice of Virtue, and endeavour to recommend and inforce it on the Mind from its *own* native Charms? But to make this Matter still, if possible, more evident, let us suppose the present excellent Order of Things inverted, and that God of his own mere Pleasure had given Mankind quite contrary Laws, and commanded *Rebellion, Murder, Ingratitude*, and all Manner of Intemperance and Debauchery, instead of their *opposite Virtues*, would the same Fitness, Beauty and Propriety appear to these Gentlemen, as there does now, in *Virtue*? If not, from whence the Difference arises, let them answer.

As God is an infinite Mind or Spirit, perfectly acquainted at every Instant of Time with whatever *hath been, is, or shall be*, and all Things *possible to be*, 'tis evident that all possible Relations of Persons and Things are fully known to him, and that all *moral and divine* Obligations arising from the Relation we stand in to God and to each other, were in their own Nature *previous* to actual Law or Commandment; because the one was in Time, and the other eternal; one commenced only (at best) with the *Being and Beginning* of Creatures, the other was from all Eternity *co-existent* with

with the *Divine Wisdom* itself; and such an inseparable Concomitant therewith, that with regard to the *Divine Being* himself, it was absolutely impossible but that, on his creating such a Rank of Beings as we are, *moral* and *religious* Obligations must have been *invariably* and *unalterably* the same; and if God's having commanded the Practice of Virtue be its peculiar Sanction, and that *alone* which distinguishes it from Vice or Evil, then by the same or as good an Argument, his commanding Light in the Beginning, is all the Reason we have for esteeming Light and Darkness different, as they really are, the one being the actual Presence of a real Body, and the other a mere Name to signify his Absence; not that Vice is therefore a mere Name to signify the Absence of Virtue (for Comparisons seldom hold good in *every* minute Particular) but there is a Parity between the two Cases, sufficient to justify my bringing in the one as an Illustration of the other. There is no Knowledge *more certain* than what Mankind commonly have of Good and Evil, and he who, in order to serve any private Scheme of Religion, goes about to depreciate this Knowledge, robs Mankind of all Truth and Certainty whatever, and in the End subjects his own darling Schemes to the same Uncertainty; for if we cannot judge of the Fitness of plain, moral Truth and Duty, neither can we of any Scheme of Religion, more especially such as hang together more by Art and

and human Contrivance, than by Reason or Revelation.

BEING very desirous to get all the Information I could concerning the Matter in Debate, I have attentively read over Mr. *Cole* on the *Sovereignty* of God. I know 'tis thought an unanswerable Performance; and so far as it regards general Christianity, it is worth every Christian's serious Notice: But as to the Doctrine it was wrote to support, it leaves it (in my Judgment) no better than it found it, but is miserably weak and defective as to any Thing that looks like sound Reason or true Argument; and amounts to no more than this poor Assertion, That because God is a *Sovereign* he may do what he pleases: And from the Instances he brings from Scripture, 'tis plain that Mr. *Cole* himself pays as *little* Regard to the intrinsic Worth and Excellence of Things, as is done by many of his Brethren. The Manner in which he has pleased to give us the Story of *Jacob* and *Esau*, proves the Truth of this Observation. I have no great Inclination to spend Time in explaining *hard Passages* of Scripture, or to trespass on the Reader's Patience, by throwing one Text of *hard* and *uncertain* Meaning against another; for by this Means the Controversy hath been needlessly prolonged. Where the Scriptures are *plain, positive* and *reasonable*, their Authority ought to be conscientiously adhered to: But as this is not always the Case, the next Thing to knowing what is the *true*

B Meaning

Meaning of any particular Text of Scripture, is to know what it neither *does* nor *can* possibly mean; in which Case the Divine Attributes, and the Nature and Reason, or (if you please) Fitness of Things, is the best Rule. We *cannot*, it is impossible we *should* understand the certain determinate Meaning of any Text of Scripture *better*, if altogether *so well*, as we do *know* certainly that God is *just* and *good*, and *know* also as clearly what *Justice* and *Goodness* mean, when applied to the *Deity*, as we do when we apply them to *ourselves*. And this Rule, if duly observed, would be abundantly sufficient to set aside many Interpretations of Scripture too commonly admitted upon this and the like Occasions. And besides this never failing Argument (to all who attend duly to its Force) it is worth while just to remark, that though, as the *Bible* now stands, there are in it (as we must acknowledge) some Passages which (especially at first sight) seem to favour the Doctrine of *Sovereignty*, &c. yet as it is possible, nay sometimes easy to give them *another Interpretation*, and the general Scope and Tenor of the Scripture being agreeable with such an Interpretation, we have abundantly more Reason to *reject* than to *admit* of the Sense in which these Gentlemen are pleased to understand and expound many Texts of the *Bible* relating to this and other affirmative Points.

I WOULD

I WOULD not, as I observed before, presume to impose on the Reader's Time and Patience, by entering unnecessarily into the scriptural Part of the Argument; yet I must beg Leave to make now and then an Observation or two as I go along; and the first Thing that falls in my way is, the Story of *Jacob* and *Esau*, and the Account which Mr. *Cole* gives of it. He not only relates the Story, but assures us that *Jacob's* obtaining the Blessing was of Divine Appointment, and (what is more extraordinary) that the *Falshood* and *Fraud* he practised to accomplish it, was all of God's own immediate Direction; and this he gives as an Instance of God's *Sovereignty*, and proceeding contrary to the moral Fitness of Things, and the Nature of those Laws he hath given to Man. That God intended *Jacob* the Blessing, or preferred him to *Esau*, I readily grant; but cannot admit it to be inferred from thence, that the Means, by which it was, as we reckon, accomplished, were *Divine* also: There is a more natural or (at least) more justifiable way of accounting for the whole Matter. According to the Account, it seems plain, that *Rebecca* only, and not her Husband, was privy to this Designation of the *Deity*: she had upon Inquiry (when with Child) received such an Assurance from the LORD; which might be the *first Cause* of her preferring *Jacob* to *Esau*, and which in Time, 'tis probable, grew up into a much greater Degree of *Partiality* and *Fondness*; All this Time the good

old *Patriarch*, her Husband, seems to have been entirely unacquainted with the Affair. And when the Time drew nigh in which, according (as some think) to Custom, he was about to *blefs* his *eldest* Son, *Rebecca* then grew diffident of the Accomplishment of the Promise in *Jacob's* Behalf, and applied herself to the Means, which the Text tells us was used on that Occasion. As to the Authority those Heads of Families had to *confer Benefits* on their Offspring, by way of *Blessing*, though I shall not much contend about it, yet give me Leave to make a few Observations. It don't appear to me that *Isaac*, in giving this Blessing, did so properly or so much bestow it on the *Person* of *Jacob* present, as he did on the *Person* of *Esau* absent; because it is the Intention which ought principally to be regarded, and *Esau* undoubtedly was intended. Again, this way of blessing, &c. if considered in itself as a mere Tradition, could be *no more* efficacious, than what now prevails in some Parts of the *Christian Church*. All true Authority of this kind (if any there be) must result from *immediate Inspiration and Command*; and whether *Isaac* had these Qualifications, while *Jacob* stood before him, personating *Esau*, is a Matter of no small Doubt and Dispute. He was ('tis evident) much surpris'd at the Cheat put on him by his *Wife* and *Son*, and would doubtless very willingly have given *Esau* the Preference, according to his first Intention; but something *supernatural* seems now to have seized and satisfied

fied him, that *Jacob* was the Person intended, for he cries out, "I have blessed him, yea and he shall be blessed." And this latter Assurance, and the Energy and Satisfaction wherewith the Words were spoken, I take *rather* to have been the *true Blessing* than the *other*. For as the Reason of *Jacob's* Dissimulation was intirely owing to his Mother's Diffidence and Impatience, so there is no Doubt to be made, but that the *Almighty* himself would, had she not interfered, have brought it about in a manner becoming his *Holiness*, and not by *Falshood*, *Deceit*, and *Dissimulation*. Religion can never be *more* dishonoured, or the Dispensations of God to Mankind receive greater Reproach, than when *Divine Purposes* are under (God's immediate Direction) said to be accomplish'd by Methods in themselves *evil* and *immoral*, and altogether opposite to His Commands. Hath he forbid us lying under the *Penalty* of *Hell-Fire*, and shall he himself practise it, or immediately influence another to do it, for the sake of bringing to pass some Event, which he could as easily have accomplish'd by Methods purely righteous and honourable! And had *Jacob* never been prompted or attempted to obtain the Blessing in the manner he did attempt it, 'tis more than probable that God, who removed *Isaac's* Surprise, and caused him to say as he did, "I have blessed him, yea and he shall be blessed," would never have permitted or impowered *Isaac* to have *blessed Esau* in an *effectual* manner beyond his Brother: or if
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a mere Pronouncing of Words, when uttered as a Blessing from the Heads of Families, was in itself an *irreversible Blessing*, and *Isaac* had attempted to bestow it on *Esau*, God no doubt would have stayed his Mouth by *Intimations within*, as he did on another Occasion the *Hand of Abraham* by an Angel without; provided, I say, it be allowed that a formal Blessing from the Mouth of *Isaac* was necessary to confirm on *Jacob* those superior Privileges which God had designed for him, and that this Interpretation of the Text is more honourable and better becoming the Truth and Majesty of the *Divine Being*. I appeal not to Reason only, but to Mr. *Cole* himself: For whatever Influence Prejudice or Enthusiasm may have on some Minds, there are certain Seasons wherein Truth will display itself to the Reason and Understanding of Mankind, and extort even from the Mouths of those who sometimes oppose her, the most ample Concessions in her Favour. Take the following as an Instance—*Cole's Sovereignty of God*, Page 41, 2d Edit. “ To this also might
 “ be added the strict Injunctions that God hath
 “ laid upon the subordinate Dispensers of his
 “ Law; as namely, to judge the People with
 “ just Judgment, not to wrest Judgment, nor
 “ respect Persons; yea he curseth them that
 “ pervert Judgment, and will surely reprove
 “ them that accept Persons; and shall mortal
 “ Man be more just than God? will he under
 “ such

“such Penalties command Men to do thus,
“and not do so himself?”

THE Argument is undoubtedly equally applicable to the Sin of Lying, or indeed to any Sin whatever; and I appeal to every unprejudiced Reader, if any Thing more to the Purpose could be urged against his own Account of the Affair between *Jacob* and *Esau*, or even against the Doctrine itself which he writes his Book to support: and this, in Conjunction with my foregoing Arguments, may, I hope, be Answer sufficient for the Use they make of all other parallel Places of Scripture.

By this Concession 'tis plain, that Justice and Goodness in God are considered the same as in us; how else were it possible to understand what the Laws of God truly mean? Be you perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect, is a plain Indication (taking in the Context) of the moral Perfections of the Divine Nature, in Part apparent to us, as the Text observes, from his admirable Bounty in the Creation: he causeth his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth his Rain on the Just and the Unjust. Though at other Times these Gentlemen, when hard pinched with the Iniquity and Injustice of their Doctrines, apply for Refuge to the *Sovereignty* of God, and give strong Intimations, that *Justice* and *Goodness*, when applied to God, are mere unmeaning Sounds, which at best signify

nify what mere sovereign Pleasure pleases to do; and that when applied to Man, they signify quite another Thing. And this naturally leads me to the second Thing I proposed to consider, *viz.* That allowing the Doctrine of *Election* to be, as they say, resolveable into GOD's Sovereignty; that GOD is just such a Sovereign as this Doctrine supposes, and these Gentlemen take him to be; that they have his Word for their own Election and Salvation; yet even then there could be no manner of Certainty as to Religion, no Dependance on the Promises and Threatenings of the Gospel; and consequently the supposed Elect must beat the Air, and run at the same or as great Uncertainties, as any other Persons whatever under the Government of such an arbitrary Being.

I HAVE, to avoid Dispute, proposed this Argument more to the Advantage of the Elect than I was strictly obliged to do, by allowing them to be absolutely certain, that God has told them that they are his Elect, and that he will give them eternal Life; which, allowing the Doctrine of *Election* to be true, is generally much more than they can prove, either to themselves or to others: allowing, I say, the Doctrine of *Election* to be clearly revealed in Scripture, there will be this Difficulty behind, as to the certain Marks of being of that Number. The Scripture must also as clearly reveal the Marks as it does the Doctrine, or we shall

shall not be able to apply with any Certainty to ourselves. Is believing the Doctrine, &c. and thinking myself one of this happy Number, a Rule sufficient to abide by? If so, no Man who has this Faith, concerning the Doctrine and himself, can ever depart from it. Yet there were, during the last Century, many Instances of Persons zealous in that way, who saw Occasion afterwards to renounce the Doctrine itself, and with it that imaginary and ungrounded Conceit of their being, for no Reason whatever, God's dear Children and Favourites, and embraced in its room the Doctrines of universal Grace and Free-will; and upon the best Reasons too, for as without the one, God cannot be just, so without the other, Man, being no Agent, can be no Subject of Rewards and Punishments. These very Men were before thought to be elect by their most spiritual and best judging Brethren, who pronounced them elect in *Christ*, and unshaken in the Faith; and so indeed they judged concerning themselves: But the Grace of God being once permitted freely to operate in the Mind, it soon expelled that Ignorance and Narrowness of Spirit, which (even in many well meaning Persons) is the genuine Effect of such narrow Doctrines. If having this Faith be no certain Mark, because a Man may depart from it, what Proof have they? surely none: But allowing them an absolute Certainty, as to themselves, that God hath told them, in Person, that they are his

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Elect,

Elect, it will (on their own darling Principle of Sovereignty) amount to just nothing at all; because, as a Sovereign, God may promise one thing, and intend, nay do another, or the contrary; nor can they prove or have they the least Assurance he will not thus deal with them, without recurring to other Principles, which will hold equally strong against the Doctrines themselves—to this Dilemma are these Gentlemen inevitably reduced; they must either give up the Doctrines, or part with any Security of Dependence on God himself as to their own Happiness. It will be *in vain* here to refer to the *Goodness of God*, though on *my* Principles the Argument would be unanswerable; on *theirs* it is *stark naught*, and avails nothing. And pray observe the *double Dealing* this reduces them to; it is something like setting up *two Gods* instead of one, or, which is much the same, ascribing to the one *eternal, unchangeable Being*, an inconsistent and contrary Conduct. Here is, *first*, a *mere arbitrary Being* that decrees, or pretends to decree, by mere *Sovereign Pleasure* only, the Salvation of the *Elect*; but, because such a Being may as well break his Promise as keep it, here is *another* to make *good* the Promise, who invariably acts according to the moral Fitness of Things: Or, if you take it the other way, here is, *1st*, A Promise made as a mere *Sovereign*, undetermined by, and unregardful of *all* moral Obligations; and, *2dly*, The Performance of this Promise is expected from a Principle of Justice

Justice and Goodness; ever conformable to the moral Reason and Fitness of Things: And certainly, in either Case, it leaves Things very precarious; nor can the Promises of such a Deity as this (I speak it with all possible Reverence to the true God himself) be any thing near so valuable, or fit to be depended on, as the Engagements of a good and worthy Man. And whatever these Gentlemen, to put a more plausible Out-side on their Doctrines, say, concerning the Freedom and Excellence of that State, wherein our first Father *Adam* was created, and the *Possibility* of his having remained perfectly innocent, and the Blessings of eternal Life which would have been thence derived to *ALL* his Posterity, it is plain to me they generally believe no such thing; but that, on the contrary, *GOD* absolutely *willed* and *decreed* the *Fall of Adam*. Mr. Cole himself, their great Advocate, is far from supposing the Condition of *Adam* to have been proper for abiding long in Obedience to the Divine Command, or that, had he stood, his Posterity would have thence become *impeccable* and *happy*: on the contrary, he represents *Adam's* Condition as a very weak and imperfect State, by no means suited to the Temptations which his Maker knew he would shortly be exposed to, and overcome with; and all his Posterity, *had they been tried one by one, would, it seems, have failed as he did*, Page 72. If all this does not amount to something equal to a positive Assertion that *GOD* *willed* the *Fall of Adam*,

and in Consequence of it, the Guilt and Desert of eternal Death, which is said to be thence derived, I do not know what is or can be equal to it ; and indeed all this and much more may easily be resolved into the Doctrine of *Sovereignty*: and whoever thinks they boggle at such a Belief, let them consult their great apostle Mr. *Calvin*. But to repeat in part and further pursue my Argument, to prove that tho' a Man of this *Faith* has God's *own Word* for his Election and Salvation, he cannot on this Principle, of *mere Sovereignty*, reasonably or safely depend on it: My Reason, which is short and plain, I have given already ; because God, as a *Sovereign*, may do just what he pleases, *keep* his Promises, or *break* them. There can be no Possibility of evading this Argument, without coming back to the Goodness of God, which is at once to set aside mere *Sovereign Pleasure*, and evidently recurring to the moral Fitness of Things. As much as these Gentlemen are pleased to despise this moral Fitness, and superstitiously exalt the Will of God in Opposition thereto ; and if the *Goodness* of God proves that he *cannot* break the Promise he has made to them of eternal Life, it is at least as strong a Proof to me, that such a good Being *could not* possibly make me for eternal Misery, or which is the very same Thing, will or decree the Fall of *Adam*, and pass the Sentence of eternal Death on all his Posterity ; the far greatest Part of whom he leaves in this Condition to perish everlastingly,

everlastingly, and *miserable* me among the rest.

A **DUE** Survey of the two Cases or Conditions of the Elect and Non-elect, may serve to set this Matter in a clear Light. God being in himself antecedent to the Existence of all other Beings, infinitely glorious and happy, could have no Occasion for Creatures to add to his Blessedness; all that we call *evil*, such as Cruelty and Injustice in Man, ever arises from such a *vicious* and *imperfect* State of Mind, as cannot, for that Reason, possibly belong to *Deity*. As the Sources whence these Evils arise cannot therefore be in God, such a Conduct, as these Doctrines suppose, is also equally impossible to proceed from God, whose *only Intent* in creating must be to communicate Happiness to his Creatures; Creation infers Providence, and to bring a sensible rational Being into this World; and, instead of taking *due Care* of its Safety and Happiness, to *decree* and render it eternally miserable, is in its *own Nature* much worse, than making an absolute Promise of eternal Life to any created Being, and *disappointing that Being* of its Happiness, whether by annihilation, or by being changed to another State, or Mode of being no more happy than the present mortal: Life 'tis only a Breach of Promise, which, in such a *Sovereign*, is a mere Trifle. We have *no natural Right* to Immortality, *much* less to immortal Happiness; it is the mere effect of Divine Bounty—
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But being created in a weak, dependent State, and surrounded with Wants, &c. we have a *natural Right* to the Care and Protection of our Maker; and tho' we allow no *formal Promise* be made on our Behalf, the *very Act* itself of creating such Beings, and the Condition we are made in, contains in it the *Substance* of a Promise; and we may be assured God will have proper regard to such Beings. If God be gracious enough to give eternal Life, to which we have not the *least* natural Right, can he possibly with-hold that which, from our Make and Dependence on him, we have just Reason to expect? and how much more impossible is it that he should make us for everlasting Misery! to make *one Man* for Damnation, is much worse than promising eternal Life to another, and breaking that Promise; he that does the former, cannot be depended on in the latter. Methinks the very Creation itself, and bountiful Provision there is made for the Accommodation and Happiness of Man, might assure us, that (Man being made principally for another World) a *proportionate Care* will be taken of his more important and everlasting Concerns; which presents me with a fair Opportunity of exposing a Notion these Gentlemen hold, or a Method they have of interpreting such plain Texts of Scripture as are brought to prove God's general Care and Providence over his Creation; in *particular*, where *David* says, "The tender Mercies of the LORD are over all his Works;" This, if you believe

believe them, relates only to this Life; so I think Mr. Gill says. But what then, Is no Inference thence to be made? If God be thus tender to provide Temporals, how much more will he be kind to the Soul and provide for that? 'tis a natural and strong Way of arguing, and it was our Saviour's own Method of arguing, as the most Plain and Conclusive, "Wherefore if God so cloath the Grass of the Field, &c. How much more shall he cloath you, &c." *Mat. vi. 30.* The Argument rises in one Case as much above the other, as *immortal Life* is preferable to the present *mortal State*; and suppose any of us should sympathise with a near Friend under a *small Degree* of Pain and Affliction, would not the same Spirit of Friendship and Humanity have a *stronger Sympathy*, when Affliction becomes more intense and severe? to be tender and pitiful in the least and lowest Matters, and unregardful and cruel in important and everlasting Concerns, is, with regard to the *Divine Being*, a moral Impossibility; 'tis *beneath* human Nature and Prudence, and the Practice of a good Man: And yet these Doctrines teach this horrible Impiety concerning the great God himself.

To sum up this Argument, That Being who can make a sensible rational Creature on purpose for *Damnation*, instead of taking a reasonable Care of it, which, from its Make and Dependance, it has a Right to expect, as much as though a formal Promise were made, may with

with altogether as much (*may more*) Justice break its Promises of eternal Life *made to a Creature* of the same Kind; its Claim not being founded in Nature, but built on Promise. As the former would be a more cruel and unjustifiable Proceeding than the latter, he that is capable of doing the one, can have no *moral Perfections* in his Nature sufficient to secure the *Elect* against his doing the other; and on this *wild* and *boundless* Principle of *Sovereignty*, it is possible that, with regard to *Religion*, Things may be quite *reversed* hereafter; the *Elect*, as they are called, made *miserable*, and the *Non-elect* *happy*. I think we may challenge the whole World to shew on this mad Principle the contrary; and why, as well as any thing else, such an Oeconomy may not be resolved into *Sovereign Pleasure*. If God to *Isaac* conveyed such errant Falshoods by the Instrumentality of *Jacob's Mouth*, Why not make the same *deceitful Use* of the *Bible*; or even of his own immediate Word in regard to the *Elect*? If God, as Mr. Gill I think observes, has two Wills, "One publick Will of Command, and another of Intention, which is "private;" Why, with regard to the *Elect*, may he not promise one thing, and intend, nay resolve on another? One would think it impossible for any rational Man to think thus of his Creator, that it is possible he should command *one Thing* under the *severest Penalties*, and at the *same Time* not only *will* and *intend*, but *irresistably* and secretly work to accomplish just the

the contrary, and after all punish severely the Creatures concerned, whom he actuates to bring his secret Purposes to pass: If there can be such a thing as arbitrary Power and tyrannical Government, in the very worst Sense of all, here it is. And here certainly is all the Cruelty, Folly, and Tyranny which I told you in the Beginning the Government of such an arbitrary Being (as these Gentlemen represent the Deity to be) must ever be liable to. It is evident, that as worthy Sentiments of God and of Religion better the Mind and improve the Understanding, so do weak and superstitious Principles corrupt the intellectual Faculty, and render the Soul more inhuman than it is in its natural State, unassisted and unimproved by Divine Grace. I have the rather made use of this Argument, not only because I have never seen it urged before, but because I think it more nearly affects Men of this Faith than any I have hitherto met with. I may be mistaken; but while it has such weight with me, I cannot but earnestly recommend it to the close and impartial Consideration of all who profess this Faith, more especially those who preach it publicly to the World; whose Acknowledgement of what I take to be Truth, or friendly Animadversions thereon, will be Matter of no small Satisfaction to me: but I must here enjoin one Caution, *viz.* that it will be absolutely in vain to produce Texts of Scripture, till this Point is better settled between us. In the Art of evading the plainest Scripture Proofs, I

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allow these Gentlemen to be very skilful and expert; nor can I help believing, that a small Part of the Penetration and Dexterity usually exercised on these Occasions, would in Men of contrary Principles, or even in themselves, could they be persuaded to think differently, be abundantly sufficient to overthrow even the Doctrines themselves: and here I might safely rest the Argument, and make a final End of it. *Sovereignty*, such an one as they contend for, once proved, any thing whatever may be allowed to follow, and all Disputations will be utterly in vain. Allow but the *Roman Church* its *Infallibility*, and the Truth of other Doctrines will unavoidably follow. Till these Gentlemen, I say, set my main Principles aside, all the Scripture in the World will be nothing to their Purpose. Not but in the main the *Bible* is against them; for the Scriptures reveal God's Being and Attributes *more clearly* than they do most Points of Doctrine: the Reason is, because the Doctrines commonly embraced are in themselves *not so plain* to Reason, as the Being and Attributes of God; the latter being generally acknowledged in all Christian Churches, tho' at the same Time they widely differ about particular Doctrines, some of which have no doubt been greatly corrupted in passing through *various Hands* and Translations: and I have been informed by much better Judges than I pretend to be, that the *New Testament*, even in these very Doctrines I have been contending against, has by *some Partiality* or

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Neglect been made to speak more roundly in their Favour, than the original *Greek* or best Copies will support; and that in some Places the Meaning of the Original is inverted in the Translation. The Scriptures not only revealing to us the *Being* and *Attributes* of God *more clearly* than it does many Doctrines, and that Fundamental of all true Religion being also in itself perfectly agreeable to the Light of Nature; 'tis evident we are bound to reject the most positive Text of Scripture militating against this everlasting and fundamental Truth: and rather than part with it, we had much better suppose the Writer, as to disputable Points, to have been mistaken at the first, or the true Meaning corrupted by others. The Translators are allowed to have been fallible Men, and 'tis very probable some Errors might creep in at that Door: But it will not so easily be granted that the *inspired Writers* could mistake, nor would I suppose it, unless in *very extraordinary Cases*, where either *that* or something *worse* must be supposed; and such a Supposition will I am sure much better become us, than to imagine it possible for God to make a Revelation of his Will to Man, which shall upon Examination be found *contrary* to his Being and Goodness, as well as expressly contrary to other plain Parts of this Revelation. Tho' the Argument, I say, might be safely rested here, yet as there are some well meaning Persons, who believe that *Adam* was made upright, and furnished with a Stock of Strength and Understanding sufficient to pre-

serve his Innocence; that God made a Covenant with him, as our *Federal* or *Representative Head*, wherein it was stipulated, that if he continued upright during the Time of Probation allotted, *all* his Posterity should be *for ever* happy; but that if he fell, *all* should be *subject* to everlasting Misery, as the counter Part of the Covenant; and he falling, the Restoration of his fallen Race should be intirely owing to the good Pleasure of God, who might *redeem all* or only *a Part*; and leave the rest to perish in the State wherein he found them, and in which *Adam* had involved them by his Transgression: This they call *Preterition*, or a Passing-by, which sounds a little better than that harsh Word *Reprobation*: And on this first Transgression *some* found the Doctrine of *Election*, and others that of *Infant-Baptism*, as an Expedient to wash away this original Guilt; and it must be owned the Virtue of the Remedy is admirably well suited to the Nature of the Malady. I shall for their sakes inspect a little farther into the Affair; to me it appears unreasonable, and therefore improbable that God should make with *Adam* any such Covenant or Agreement, or suffer the eternal State of all Mankind to hang upon the single Thread of *one Man's* Behaviour, and who too (it seems) God knew would swerve from his Obedience: besides, in all equitable Covenants, *every Party* concerned has a Right to be consulted, nor can they be justly included to their own Detriment, without Consent first obtained,

obtained (especially if the Thing covenanted for, has an immediate, or may have a very fatal tho' very remote Tendency, to make *wretched and unhappy*) which in this Case, with regard to the unborn, could not possibly be had. I am sensible the Gentlemen against whom I am arguing (especially Mr. *Gill*) have many pretty Inventions to justify such a Conduct in the Divine Being, such as producing parallel Instances drawn from the allowed Practice of Men, and Usage of the State; in particular the Law relating to *High-Treason*, whereby a *Rebel's* immediate Descendants are *deprived* of their Father's Estate, with others of a like Kind; to all which, what I am about to offer may, I hope, be a sufficient Answer: The two Cases differ so widely, that it will be no easy Undertaking to make any Thing of this Instance in their Favour; and 'tis very surprising to find Men of the brightest Intellects so weak as to argue and infer, from the Laws of *Fallible Men*, to the Laws of an *Infallible* and *Holy Being*: For such Institutions as Men, in this weak and imperfect State, may think convenient for their own Sakes and the Good of Society to establish and ordain, can be *no Rule* to him, whose Infinite Wisdom and Almighty Power set him *far above* all such Necessity. Nor, again, does this Case come up to the Matter in Dispute: It is true, that the Son of a Rebel *cannot*, according to our Laws, inherit his Father's Estate; but what then, does it deprive him of any thing that was his own before?

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No; the Law convicts the Rebel while *in Possession* of his Estate, which it considers as his *own Property*, and which therefore it justly takes away for his *own Offence*. Indeed, in Cases of Hereditary Possessions, it may seem a little hard, because it prevents the *next* Heir from inheriting; but if there be any Evil or Imperfection in this, we must excuse it for the Sake of the Intent, which might be for the general Good, the more effectually to deter Men from *treasonable Conspiracies* against their Prince, whereby the Happiness of Society hath been often greatly disturbed, and whole Kingdoms and Countries depopulated; but in this Case it is not strictly the Heir's, till he comes into Possession; for the Law by which he may possess hereafter, hath in it this *particular* Exception, as to the Crime of *High Treason*, which, whenever it occurs as to the *Parent*, renders the Son incapable, &c. With regard to our Laws, we may, in some Sense, be said to make them ourselves, by our Representatives, whom we constitute for that End: and 'tis besides very probable, that some great Men, who formerly possessed great Estates, and settled them on the Male Heirs in their Families from one Generation to another, might help to make this very Law itself concerning Treason, and consequently they could not but acquiesce with this *very Exception* to the Right of Inheritance in their Posterity. But if it be still said to be unjust, though necessary, 'tis no Argument; for it *cannot* be unjust and necessary too: the Law, in this Case, ought

ought rather (with submission) so far as it affects a Man's Children, to be alter'd; and if it robs us of the Security which arises from deterring the Parent on Account of the Evils which shall afterwards befall his Child, 'tis easy to remedy this, by laying an *additional Punishment* on the Traitor himself; which, as *Self* is much nearest to us all, might better prevent the Sin of Rebellion. If the present Law be just in itself, there can be no Objection to it; if it be unjust, *no Argument* of any Weight can be drawn from it in regard to the *Divine Being*, who is holy, wise, and true, and so are all his Appointments concerning the Children of Men.

To bring this favourite Instance of theirs up to the Point, they should have produced a Law which subjected the Son (for the Father's Offence) to the *same corporal Punishment* with the Father, and then must have proved such a Law to be just and good. But as these Gentlemen are so fond of bringing Instances from the *Practice of Men* in this frail State, in Justification of their own Doctrine, I shall present them with one or two of my own. *Murder* has sometimes been committed under such Circumstances, that though the Murderer has been arraigned, there hath been no room to condemn him, all Circumstances having concurred, in the Eye of the Law, to acquit him; will the Almighty therefore acquit him? Again, on the other hand, in the Case of Murder, things have so fallen out, as to make an innocent Person look like the Murderer, in
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the Eye of the Law or Court, which has therefore sometimes proceeded to Death itself; is this Man therefore guilty before God? I have put these two Cases, purely to shew the Absurdity of such kind of Arguments: and I hope they will consider better of it, and advance them no farther.

IF there was such a Covenant between God and *Adam*, 'tis strange *no Notice* should be taken of it in the Law given to *Adam*, as laid down in the *Bible*, and where, of all Places, we have most Reason to expect it—this must surely have been the fittest Place for its Insertion—Nor is it only absent here, for there is no positive Account of any such Covenant in all the *Old Testament*. Besides, when the Law was given, and threatening (in Case of Disobedience) pronounced on *Adam*, 'twas *merely personal*—*In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*. And when *Adam* and *Eve* had broke the Command, and God descended to judge them for it, their Sentences were *personal* and *particular*, and no reproaching *Adam* on the Account of Evils to be thence brought on his Posterity, and *much less* of eternal Damnation. The *Jews* indeed, many of whom were weak enough to embrace any Absurdity at all, had by some Means contracted a Notion, not altogether unlike this of *original Sin*, probably from a Misunderstanding of the second Commandment, which speaks of “visiting the Iniquity of the Father upon the Children, &c.” But 'tis highly worthy of our Notice, that God him-
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self was greatly displeased with their having imbibed this Notion, and employed the Prophet *Ezekiel* to refute it at large; the Substance of which I cannot avoid setting down, it being so full to my Purpose. The Prophet introduces it thus, *Ezek. xviii. 2. What mean ye, that ye use this Proverb in Israel, The Fathers have eaten sour Grapes, and the Childrens Teeth are set on edge? Ver. 4. Behold all Souls are mine, as the Soul of the Father, so also the Soul of the Son is mine: the Soul that sinneth, it shall die. The Prophet then from ver. 5. to 19. puts the two Cases of a righteous Man's having a wicked Son, and a wicked Man's having a righteous Son, in order to shew that neither is the one better for his Father's Uprightness, nor the other at all worse for his Father's Wickedness; but that all is, as it should be, placed to the Account of their own Merits or Demerits. Ver. 20. The Soul that sinneth, it shall die: the Son shall not bear the Iniquity of the Father, neither shall the Father bear the Iniquity of the Son; the Righteousness of the Righteous shall be upon him, and the Wickedness of the Wicked shall be upon him. Ver. 23. Have I any Pleasure at all that the Wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his Ways and live? Ver. 25. Yet ye say, The Way of the Lord is unequal. Hear now, O House of Israel, Is not my Way equal? are not your Ways unequal? Ver. 32. For I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves and live ye.*

WORDS more positive against this Doctrine cannot be laid together. *Justice* and *Equity* are here, by the Almighty himself, considered as the *very same*, both in God and Man; and the same *Justice* and *Equity* which *He commands* us to make the Rule of *our Actions*, 'tis evident *He here* makes the Rule of his *own*. He blames them for their false Principles, their Ignorance and Bigotry, and is not a little offended because they thought him capable of acting in so evil and unrighteous a Manner, as would be that of punishing the Child for the Parent's Offence; and strongly and solemnly assures them he will do no such Thing: and as *Justice* and *Equity* would not bear it then, it is plain that God could never take any such cruel and disreputable Measures, either in the Beginning, or at any time afterwards. To act thus at the Creation of Man, and disdain the Imputation with Indignation afterwards, argues a strange Inconsistency in the Conduct of God towards Men; but the Truth is, the same Reasons which made him abhor the Imputation afterwards, could not but infallibly prevent his making any such unrighteous Covenant in the Beginning. What would you think of a Man, who is a Villain to-day, and boasts much of his great Honesty to-morrow? But suppose there was such a Covenant, our Condition, in point of Innocence, is just the same as it would be without it; we could have no manner of Concern with *Adam's*
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Transgression, and our Innocence in either Case being *exactly* the same, God cannot but look upon us (in our natural State, before we commit Sin) as Creatures that never did any Thing to offend him, and consequently be gracious and kind to us; and if we are as innocent, as tho' no such Covenant had ever been made, God cannot but regard us accordingly: and this proves that such a Covenant could never be made, because to no good or valuable End. To talk as some do of our existing in *Adam* at the Time of his Transgression, is very absurd, when, as *intelligent* and *free Creatures*, it is evident we did not exist at all. Sin is a Transgression of some Law, which we have at the *same time Power* to keep. God never requires Impossibilities. He that made Man knows best what he is capable of, and hath undoubtedly taken care to proportion the *Duties* he requires of Man, to the *Powers* he hath bestowed on him. The contrary would be very hard dealing indeed—If a Law be given to me, I must in the first Place have Understanding sufficient to judge of its Authority, and the Obligations it lays me under; and, in the second Place, I must have Power to keep it, otherwise it can never be a Law suitable to me; and a Man's *Age*, *Complexion*, *Stature*, and *Circumstances*, are as just Causes for Damnation as the Breach of a Law which lies beyond the Reach of his Knowledge and Abilities. But supposing in

the last Place, that God did make such a Covenant with *Adam*, &c. (tho' I think I have shewn it to be impossible) let us see how the Doctrines of *Election* and *Preterition* will turn out *then*. I have already endeavoured to make it appear that God does not act in that arbitrary Manner which these Gentlemen teach; that though he is indeed governed by no Law without, or accountable to any for what he is pleased to do, yet his own Rectitude of Mind is to him an invariable Rule of Righteousness, equally secure to all the Intents and Purposes of a written Law without: and this argues the adorable and incomparable Excellency of his Being, who, tho' by Nature he is infinitely above all Power and Authority whatever, yet his moral Perfections continually prompt him to promote the Happiness of the meanest of his Creatures. It was *sovereign Goodness* (rather than *sovereign Pleasure*) which prompted the Almighty to create Man, in order to communicate Happiness to him; and if *Adam's* Posterity might be said to fall in him, yet God must at least look on them in a more favourable Manner, than if they had actually sinned themselves; and consequently it could never suit with his Goodness to punish eternally *any one* under this Circumstance, without *first giving* him an Opportunity of recovering from his lapsed State; nor could he ordain the Means on Purpose to *save some* by *electing Grace*, without *saving all*. God does nothing without sufficient Reason: he could save none
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under this Circumstance, but as they were *in themselves* Objects of his Pity and Mercy; and if ever there was an Object of Mercy, here it is, an immortal Soul condemned for the Fault of *another*, which it could by no Means hinder or prevent, to suffer eternal Torment. There is something greatly moving in such an Object as this; and as *all Adam's* Posterity were equally involved in his Guilt, *all* are Objects of Mercy *precisely the same*, and therefore there is not the least Ground for the Difference which we are told is made by Election; because 'tis making a *Distinction* where there is *no Difference*. Here is the Race of *Adam*, considered as *equally* fallen in him, divided into two very unequal Parts (equally in themselves and altogether Objects of Mercy, if such an Object can be) by the Almighty himself. The smaller Number he is at all Events determined to save, and to destroy the greater Number. But let them apply my Arguments on the *Sovereignty of God* against the *Certainty* of their Election, and I believe they will find but little Reason to boast of the Doctrine of electing Grace. They tell us indeed that this Doctrine of theirs makes the Death of *Christ* of more Effect than ours, because it secures the Salvation of *some*: But surely that Doctrine, which *puts all* into a Capacity of Salvation, must be better than that which leaves *almost every Man* to perish; and if it was better to save a few than to save none in this arbitrary Manner, it must still have been better and
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more to the Glory of *Christ* arbitrarily to have saved all Mankind. They say also that their Doctrine of Election is a much better Ground for Love and good Works, than is that of *free Grace*. But the contrary is apparent; for if *unconditional Election* be the true Doctrine of the Gospel, and Man is *equally dear* and acceptable to God *without* as he is *with* good Works, what Inducement can such a Person have to please God that Way, when he is already as well pleased without them? If Election is founded upon an *unconditional Decree*, the natural Inference (in all such as believe the Doctrine and themselves to be of the Elect) must be this—if I am of the Number of the Elect, nothing can frustrate my Happiness; I may gratify my favourite Passions, and wallow in all Kinds of Wickedness, Luxury, and Sensuality, and be equally acceptable to the Almighty as was *David* in the Sins of Murder and Adultery: on the contrary, if I am not of that Number which shall be saved, all my Pains and Obedience will never procure me Acceptance with God, and therefore I *will seek* all possible Gratifications in this Life, seeing 'tis the only Time and Place wherein I can obtain any thing like Happiness; nor can the Liberty I take here increase my Misery hereafter, the *precise Degree* of *that* being fixed along with the Decree of my Damnation: though this Persuasion of being set apart for everlasting Torment has more often the Effect of Desperation and *Self-Mur-*
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der; and indeed the two Extremes of Presumption and Despair are the natural Brood and Offspring of these Doctrines, as the reverend and learned Dr. *Trapp* has abundantly evinced in his excellent Discourse *against the Folly, Sin and Danger of being righteous over much*. Hypocrisy and Persecution are also the genuine Offspring of this Faith; and *whenever* it has been tried, Persecution has grown up to a considerable Maturity: for as they pretend to know the Marks of elect and reprobate Men, what can be more natural than for those who take themselves to be the *former* to persecute and take Vengeance on the *latter*. Hath not God by his own Decree of Damnation set them an Example? and if he has set a Mark on the Reprobate, they (the Elect) may very reasonably, in Imitation of the *Divine Conduct*, endeavour to make them as wretched as possible here, in this Life, and *who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect?* I am now shewing what are the genuine Effects of this Doctrine, not charging Consequences on such as neither do *see* nor *approve* of them: there is a great Difference in the Conduct of Men of this Principle, and its natural Effects are by other Things intervening often prevented, the chief of which, I believe, may be Want of Power and Opportunity; for tho' many when out of Power might be apt to say (as *Hazael* did) *what is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this Evil?* yet they would be in some Danger of behaving as that great Man did, when he came to be tried.

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Some again, who tho' they profess the Doctrine, are yet (I doubt not) sometimes under the Influence of God's *Grace*, which, as it tends to soften the Soul, and to make it more loving and humane than before, naturally prevents the Spirit of Persecution from taking such deep Root as otherwise it might. And here, tho' I don't pretend to be a *nice Judge* of the spiritual Part of Religion, yet I have heard such as have been accounted Men of the best Experience say, that when the Grace of God operates on the Soul, the ardent Love of Mankind is *inseparable therewith*. If then the better Part of those who profess this Doctrine are, in their solemn Approaches to the Almighty by Prayer, ever sensible of this *most agreeable* and humbling Operation in the Soul, I ask them if it does not *naturally distend* and enlarge their Wishes, in Behalf of all Mankind? and if this Spirit of Love be the genuine Product of the Operation of God's Grace, what shall be said of that ineffable and immense Fountain of Grace and Goodness from whence it proceeds? But on the other hand it has been observed, that among mere *enthusiastick and traditional Believers* of the Doctrine of Election, their Hypocrisy, Deceit and Dissimulation has overtop'd that of all the World besides, even beyond what human Nature could be thought capable of in its most wicked and corrupt State; in short, they seem to have made the Deceit of *Jacob*, and all other parallel Places of Scripture that furnish the worst

Part of the Lives of good Men; a *standing Rule* of Behaviour—What a blessed Company has the LORD set apart for himself!

THIS Doctrine of electing Grace, they exalt as an *incomprehensible Mystery*; so do the Papists with as good Reason that of *Transubstantiation*, for neither of them are Mysteries, or incomprehensible, but *palpable Errors*, whose Absurdity we do *easily and fully comprehend*; nor will the stale Art of playing on the Word *Mystery* amuse us any longer. Another strange Argument, which these Men make use of, in order to set aside some Passages of Scripture which are positive and express against them, is this, *that if God wills the Salvation of all Men, all must be saved, otherways we may be said to conquer the Will and Grace of God*. To which the Answer is very easy—Man is made a *free Creature*, and therefore GOD deals with him as such; because to make him free, and then arbitrarily *over rule* his Freedom, would be making him free to *no Purpose*. The Will of GOD is sometimes *positive*, and sometimes *conditional*. He gives Laws, commands us to keep them, and promises eternal Life to those who obey; nor can we suppose he commands us to obey, without *willing* our Obedience. We may indeed *resist* the Operations of his Grace: but to talk of *conquering* GOD, is Nonsense. He has made us free Creatures; he wills our Salvation, and has granted us such Aids as *are* sufficient, if we use them aright, to bring us to Happiness:

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This Conduct in the Divine Being is not only reasonable in itself, but *perfectly agreeable* to many *plain* and *express* Parts of Scripture. The *Weeping* and *Lamentation* of Christ over *Jerusalem* is a strong Proof of it: *How often would I have gathered thee, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings; but thou wouldest not!* Here was all done that was fit to be done to reclaim free Beings; not only proper Aids offer'd, but offer'd in the *most tender* and affectionate Manner, as is evident from the Comparison of the Hen, &c. and by the Words *how often*, is set forth the *great Patience* and long-suffering of God: and notwithstanding all this, they resisted to their own Destruction; God *willed*, or would have saved her, but she was stubborn and rebellious, and would not accept of Salvation, did she therefore *conquer* the Almighty? Suppose my Father gives me a good Education, a good Employment, and a competent Portion in Money, and, besides all, is continually at hand, ready further to advise and assist me whenever it may be necessary, and I am obstinate and disobedient, and by pursuing evil Courses fall into Poverty, Contempt, and Ruin: I may indeed be said to *resist*, but in *no good Sense* to *conquer* my Father. Besides, according to this absurd Way of arguing, God's Laws are to be *kept* by himself, with what Propriety then can they be said to be given to Man? he to whom the Law is given is to keep it, not the Being who gives it.

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I MIGHT here very naturally speak concerning the Sacrifice of *Christ's Death*, and *his Righteousness* imputed to us; but I shall not now discuss it fully, only a few Remarks may not be impertinent or useless. These two Points appear to me to be much misunderstood; *Sin* is said to be infinite, and that therefore nothing but an infinite Being can satisfy the Justice of God for it: a fine Story indeed, for Men to amuse us with, who pretend to believe in *only one* GOD: Here is *one* infinite Being to be satisfied for Sin; and *another* to satisfy him. And what is still as bad or worse, it supposes, that an infinite Being may for a certain Season suffer or undergo a Diminution of its Happiness; which, in an infinite and unchangeable Being, I take to be impossible. Was it then *only* the Person or *rational Soul* of *Jesus Christ* that suffered, being upheld under it by the infinite Being himself? If so, what is become of the infinite Being that was to *suffer* for Sin, or does GOD make Satisfaction to himself? 'Till these Gentlemen either renounce, or better explain this Matter, they will I hope think very favourably of all who deal in absurd Schemes of Faith.

THE Thing productive of these Absurdities is a *wrong Notion* of the Justice of GOD: Sin, they say, is infinite, because *committed against an infinite* GOD. It is doubtless sometimes a great Aggravation of it, that it is committed against GOD; but it is not so much his *Great-*

ness as our abusing his *Goodness* that aggravates the Crime: and when we consider on the other hand, that Sin is committed by a frail finite Being, very often in its unguarded Moments, prompted by Passion and Appetite, and surrounded with the most powerful Temptations, this proves more strongly that it cannot be infinite. By the *Justice* of God, is not meant that he cannot forgive Sin without Satisfaction, but that he *will not* punish the Innocent. He proposes himself as a Pattern for our Imitation, and bids us *forgive our offending Brethren, if they repent and desire Forgiveness*: and he himself will therefore forgive on the same Terms; for unless Sin becomes so enormous, as to make Punishment necessary, *Repentance* and *Amendment* is all that God expects. The Gospel is proposed to Sinners on these Terms; and as to the Death of CHRIST, it were unreasonable to think he laid down his Life by Way of Satisfaction to offended Justice, in the Manner these Gentlemen understand it; but in Testimony of the Truth of his Doctrines, and Confirmation of God's *great Love* to the World. This was the Cause of CHRIST'S Coming in the Flesh. God so loved the World, that he sent CHRIST to save it by such Preaching and Miracles, and other internal Aids, &c. as were in themselves sufficient to beget Faith in such as gave a proper Attention; such a Faith in the Soul, as was productive of Morality and Virtue in Practice. It was an *original Act* of Grace and Goodness
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in GOD, to send CHRIST into the World, to save Sinners, and not (as some superstitiously teach) a mere Compliance in GOD the Father (and that not without full Satisfaction first made) to the *voluntary* and *merciful* Intercession of CHRIST the Son. For then our Salvation would be *owing only* to the Love of CHRIST, and not *at all* to GOD's Love, who is here considered as a *rigorous* and *unrelenting Creditor*, that will not release the Debtor until full Satisfaction be made; so that CHRIST becomes our Creditor, and GOD has no farther Demand: and what Need then can there be of Intercession to GOD on our Behalf, when the Debt is already paid and full Satisfaction made. CHRIST's coming into the World was *entirely owing* to the Father's Mercy. His Doctrine, Miracles, &c. were what he had in Commission from GOD, as a Means to instruct and make the World happy; it is he who, instead of being averse to forgive frail Man his Offences, has thro' JESUS *proclaimed Pardon* to *all*, on Condition of Repentance and Amendment; and thro' the Love of GOD it was also that CHRIST was appointed a Mediator for sinful Man: So that the whole Affair arose from GOD's own Mercy.

I STAND amazed at the Gentlemen against whom I am arguing; what a *Scope* do they give to the *Sovereignty* of GOD in the Doctrines of *Election* and *Reprobation*? and yet they won't *suffer* it at all to operate in the Case of *forgiving Sin*, on the Terms of Repentance and
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Amendment. A small, yea *very small* and reasonable Allowance in regard to the *Exertion* of this Attribute, and in a *good Cause* too, would be sufficient to justify the Mercy of God in forgiving Sin; and this Notion of the Impossibility of God's forgiving Sin, without Satisfaction first made, is erroneous and despicable. Repentance and Amendment in the Creature is, in the Nature of Things, a *much better* Satisfaction than can be made by the Act of another. By the *Justice* of God is meant, that he will not punish the Innocent, and not that he cannot shew Mercy to an offending, repenting, penitent Creature, unless another sheds his Blood for an Atonement. Nor is the Righteousness of CHRIST, *strictly speaking*, imputable to any one. The Terms of the Gospel are, *Repent and be converted, and your Sins shall be blotted out*: Be sorry and amend, and I will forgive you. *The Prayer of a Righteous Man availeth much*; and God, in some Cases, to shew his Regard to the Righteous, and to excite others to become righteous also, may possibly grant *that* at the Request of such a righteous Person which without it might be improper to grant; and CHRIST being our holy and righteous Mediator, God may do more at his Request, on our Behalf, than he would do without it. Not but that (*independent of* and previous to the Intercession of CHRIST) GOD was *ever disposed* to be favourable to Man, and always ready to receive him, coming to him in a proper and becoming Manner;

net: For even this very CHRIST, and his Intercession, &c. is all ultimately the Act of GOD, and flows from his unbounded Love and Goodness to Man. So that *imputed Righteousness* can mean no more than GOD's forgiving us at the Request of JESUS CHRIST; not a *real Transfer* of his *personal* Righteousness, which is not only in itself impossible, but would take away all Necessity of our becoming holy. The Righteousness of CHRIST is altogether different to what these Men take it to be; it is a real State of Righteousness, wrought in the Soul by the Operation of CHRIST's Spirit, Man submitting thereto. I know there are some Expressions in the *New Testament*, which (if precipitantly understood, without Regard had to the Nature of the Thing, and to other plain Texts) seem a *little* to favour these Doctrines. I can't say by what Means *precisely* the Bible came into its present Condition; many Things might concur to give us wrong Apprehensions of its true Sense and Meaning. He that understands human Nature will find that Men, who have been *great Bigots* in any way of Religion, *will retain* some of their former Prejudices, even after, in the main, they may have changed their Principles. Prejudice in Education is a Leaven not so easily purged out as some may imagine; and 'tis possible the *Writings* of St. Paul may have in them a Tincture of this kind; besides what may have since crept in, by Partiality or Accident: against which, and *all Errors* of a like Kind, a due Regard to the
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Fundamental Principles, I have endeavoured to inculcate, will abundantly secure us. These are some succinct Observations, which I could not well avoid making; which perhaps may shortly be followed by something more full and comprehensive, concerning the *Virtue and Extent of CHRIST's Death* and the Nature of *imputed Righteousness*.



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